

A Corpus-based Study of Translation Styles of Two Russian Versions of *Tao Te Ching*

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ABSTRACT

This paper compares the translation styles of two Russian versions of *Tao Te Ching* and their narrative points of view from the perspective of macro-linguistic characteristics by using corpus method. It is found that the two Russian translations do not show obvious translation styles in terms of macro-linguistic features, but at the discourse level, they have different narrative perspectives in terms of the modality structure, pronouns, coherence and the use of borrowed terms, which reflects their respective translation styles.

Keywords: corpus, *Tao Te Ching*, translation style, Russian version

I. INTRODUCTION

Tao Te Ching is the first classical work with a comprehensive philosophical system and dialectical thought in the history of Chinese philosophy. It is one of the most widely translated works, second only to the *Bible*, and also the most widely translated work in Russian cultural classics. D. P. Sivillov (1798-1871) completed the Russian translation of *Tao Te Ching* in 1828 and officially published it in 1915, which was the first Russian translation of *Tao Te Ching*. Over the next hundred years, scholars have conducted considerable researches and translations of *Tao Te Ching* in the background of the sinology development in Russia, especially in the contemporary periods. Among them there are local Russian sinologists and overseas Chinese-born scholars. Some are directly translated from ancient Chinese texts, and some are translated from other languages; there are complete translations and excerpts; there are also academic prose styles and poetry styles. Currently, the main researches on translations of *Tao Te Ching* include translation and communication [1], [2], discussion on translation issues from different theoretical perspectives [3], [4], translation studies from corpus perspective [5], [6], [7]. Researches on Russian translations of *Tao Te Ching* are relatively rare, and are confined in the description of the translation and dissemination of *Tao Te Ching* in Russia [8], but no research from corpus perspective has been found.

Since Mona Baker introduced corpus into the study of translator's style [9], the study of the translator's style or translation style has become an important topic

in corpus translation studies [10], [11], [12]. It is a necessary and effective research path to discover the differences between the different Russian translations of *Tao Te Ching* by using the corpus method. In view of this, this paper attempts to take two complete Russian translations of *Tao Te Ching* as the research materials and apply corpus research method to investigating the translators' personality and styles in their translations.

II. RESEARCH OBJECTS AND METHODS

This paper takes the original text of *Tao Te Ching* and its two full-length Russian translated versions as the corpus and establishes a small parallel corpus. The original text is the version of Guying Chen [13], and the corpus of the translated texts includes that of Torchinov E. A. [14] and of A. E. Lukyanov [15]. Torchinov (1956-2003) is a Russian religious scholar, a well-known sinologist, and professor in Faculties of Oriental Studies of St. Petersburg State University. He has long been engaged in the study of Taoism and Chinese culture. In 1999, he published his *Tao Te Ching* translation in *Daoism. Dao-De jing* (Даосизм. Дао-Дэ цзин), which was revised and republished for quite several times. Lukyanov (1948-) is a famous Russian sinologist and representative figure in contemporary study of Taoism. In 1994, in *The beginning of ancient Chinese philosophy* (Начало древнекитайской философии), he published his *Tao Te Ching* translation, which was revised and republished many times.

The selected translation corpora have the following characteristics: first, they use the ancient Chinese classics of *Tao Te Ching* as the source text, rather than translating from other languages; second, both translators are contemporary Russian sinologists who

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are engaged in the study of Chinese culture and Taoism; third, the versions are both full-length translations in academic prose styles and are of comparable quality. Furthermore, there are two points worthy our attention. First, the translations not only refer to a specific version, but multiple versions. Torchinov pointed out that he used the *Mawangdui Silk Texts* and the classical annotations of He Shangong and Wang Bi when translating [14]. The difference of reference in the original text generates the difference of translation to some extent, which is neglected in this study. Second, both translators have more than one translation version and there are differences among them, which are not in the scope of this study. This study only examines the differences in the translation styles between the selected versions.

This article studies the translation styles of two Russian translations of *Tao Te Ching* at the macro-linguistic level and the discourse level of narrative points of view. The statistical data involved (excluding subtext information such as titles, chapter titles and notes) are mainly obtained from Wordless1.3.0¹, an integrated corpus tool with multi-language support for the study of language, literature, and translation, which is developed by L. Ye from Shanghai International Studies University. At the macro-linguistic level, we examined these parameters, including type, token, TTR, token length in character, lexical density, and 1-6 length tokens, etc., and then inspect the total number of sentences, and average sentence length. At the discourse level, we make in-depth analysis of text and discourse, examine the differences in modality structures, pronouns, coherence and the use of foreign words, and discover different expressions from narrative perspectives.

III. DATA STATISTICS AND ANALYSIS

A. The macro-linguistic level

We investigated the macro-linguistic features of the two translations, including the lexical features and the sentence features, to find out possible features of translations at the macro-linguistic level.

1) *The lexical level:* At the lexical level we examined type, token, TTR, token length in character, lexical density, and 1-6 length tokens. The data are shown in "Table I".

TABLE I. DATA AT LEXICAL LEVEL

Items	Torchinov	Lukyanov
Token	6938	6204
Type	2445	2377
TTR	0.35	0.38
Token Length in Character (Mean)	5.34	5.57
Count of 1-6 Length Tokens	4661	3957
Ratio of 1-6 Length Tokens (%)	67.18	63.78
LD (%)	76.10	78.63

It can be seen from "Table I" that the number of tokens in the two translations is 6938 and 6204 respectively, which shows that there is a certain difference in text length between them. Comparing TTR, it is found that Torchinov's translation is 0.35, which is slightly lower than the Lukyanov's translation of 0.38, indicating that Lukyanov's translation has relatively few repeated words and relatively high vocabulary richness. The average token lengths in character are also similar, ranging from 5.34 to 5.57. However, there is a difference in the proportion of 1-6 length tokens. Torchinov's translation has a higher value of 67.18%, indicating that it tends to use small words and cause relatively low difficulty in reading. J. Ure defined lexical density as the number of lexical words (or content words) divided by the total number of words [16], based on which we select Russian lexical words from Wordlist to get lexical density. The value of Torchinov's translation is 76.10 which is relatively low, while that of Lukyanov's translation is 78.63. From this perspective, Torchinov's translation relies more on function words, while Lukyanov's translation has relatively more information and is a little difficult to read. In general, whether it is TTR, 1-6 length tokens, average token length, or lexical density, it reflects that at the lexical level in Torchinov's translation is relatively easy to read whereas Lukyanov's is relatively difficult to read. However, the differences between the two translations are not distinct, and neither of them shows obvious translation characteristics at the lexical level.

2) *The sentence level:* At the sentence level, the number of sentences and the average sentence length in token are investigated. Average sentence length in token can reflect the differences in translation styles. Generally speaking, the complexity of a sentence is related to the average sentence length. The longer the average sentence length is, the more complex the sentence will be. The data are shown in "Table II".

TABLE II. DATA AT SENTENCE LEVEL

Items	Torchinov	Lukyanov
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¹ L. Ye Wordless, version 1.3.0, 2019. Github, <https://github.com/BLKSerene/Wordless>.

Count of Sentences	667	662
Sentence Length in Token (Mean)	10.40	9.37

As can be seen from "Table II", there is almost no difference in the number of sentences between the two translations. In terms of sentence length, the Torchinov's translation has a relatively high value, 10.4, which means its sentence length is relatively long and the sentence structure is relatively complex. E.g.:

知不知，尚矣；不知知，病也。(Chapter 71)

Тот, кто знает, что он не знает, — превосходит.
Тот, кто не знает, что он знает, — недужен.
(Torchinov)

Знание незнания — высшее, незнание знания — изъясн. (Lukyanov)

Torchinov translated the two sentences of the original into a compound structure, while Lukyanov rendered the sentences with a simple structure.

In summary, from the perspective of vocabulary, the reading difficulty of Torchinov's translation is relatively low, that of Lukyanov's translation is relatively high. At the sentence level, the sentences in Torchinov's translation are relatively long, the structures are relatively complex, and the reading difficulty is relatively high. This seems to be a contradiction. Moreover, whether at the lexical level or sentence level, the macro-linguistic features of the two translations do not show obvious translation characteristics.

B. The discourse level

The above analysis shows that the corpus observation at the macro-linguistic level cannot effectively distinguish the translation styles of the two translations. Therefore, we need to find other perspectives or aspects to discover the translation styles. Huang & Shi proposed that we can start from the narrative parameters to further observe and describe the translation styles [17]. We attempt to go deep into the text and discourse, and discover the different expressions of points of view in the two translations at the discourse level. Munday proposed there are four planes of perspectives: psychological, ideological, spatio-temporal and phraseological [18]. And the linguistic markers are type of narrator, ideational function, transitivity structures, denotational lexical items, cohesion (part of the textual function), interpersonal function, modality structures, evaluation, linked to authorial voice and implied author; textual function, particularly tense, deixis, sequencing; naming, pronouns, speech representation, use of foreign and non-standard forms. In this research we compare the two translations from four aspects — cohesion, modality structures, pronouns and the use of foreign forms to find the different styles of two translations.

1) *Cohesion*: This paper examines the discourse coherence means of expressing transition, coordination, contrast, condition and causality. The data are shown in "Table III".

TABLE III. DATA ON COHESION

Items	Torchinov	Lukyanov
но	79	32
и	331	289
а	45	36
если	44	49
поэтому	70	36
вот почему	2	39

It can be found from "Table III" that there are great differences in the textual coherence between the two translations, especially in the aspect of causality. E.g.:

故有无相生，难易相成，长短相较，高下相倾，音声相和，前后相随。是以圣人处无为之事，行不言之教，万物作焉而不辞，生而不有，为而不恃，功成而弗居。(Chapter 2)

Поэтому совершенный мудрец пребывает в делах недеяния, не прибегая к словам, он осуществляет учение. Все сущее творит, не полагая начала творению, и действует, не замышляя ничего преднамеренно. И Дао-Путь — рождает, но не обладает, действует, но не предумышляет, благими качествами и свойствами обладает, к ним не привязываясь никогда. (Torchinov)

Вот почему совершенномудрый человек правит службу недеяния, ведет учение без слов. Мириады вещей творит и не уклоняется от этого. Рождает и не обладает [ими]. Возделывает и ни на что не опирается, Успешно завершает и не ставит себе это в заслугу. (Lukyanov)

The original text uses “故(therefore)” repeatedly to indicate the causal relationship between clauses. To translate the causality, Torchinov prefers “поэтому”, while Lukyanov favors “вот почему”. Although “поэтому” and “вот почему” are synonymous structures, there are some subtle differences regarding their function. The Russian word “вот” combined with interrogative pronoun or adverb emphasizes the meaning of interrogative pronoun or adverb, and the structure “вот почему” strengthens the speaker's definite attitude to causality. Therefore, compared with Torchinov's version, Lukyanov's translation has different characteristics in terms of the coherence of clauses.

2) *Modality structures*: This paper investigated the modal adverbs and modal particle frequently used in the two translations. The data are shown in "Table IV".

TABLE IV. DATA ON MODALITY STRUCTURES

Items		Torchinov	Lukyjanov
Modal adverbs	можно	7	20
	надо	4	2
	возможно	1	0
	невозможно	0	11
	нужно	0	2
Modal particle	нельзя	12	6
	пусть	16	6

As can be seen from "Table IV", there are some differences in the use of modal adverbs between the two translations, especially in the use of "можно", "невозможно" and "нельзя". E.g.:

故贵以身为天下，若可寄天下；爱以身为天下，若可托天下。(Chapter 13)

Поэтому коль человек заботится о теле-самости своей, как о Поднебесной всей, ему и Поднебесная доверится немедля. И если человек дорожит телом-самостью своей, как Поднебесной всей, его признает всякий в Поднебесной. (Torchinov)

Вот почему, тому, кто ценит тело так же, как Поднебесную, пожалуй, можно доверить Поднебесную. Кто любит тело так же, как Поднебесную, на того, пожалуй, можно возложить Поднебесную. (Lukyjanov)

In the example sentences, "доверить" is a transitive verb, which means active meaning, while "доверится" is an intransitive verb, meaning passive meaning. Lukyjanov's translation uses modal adverbs "можно" together with transitive verb "доверить", highlighting the subject behavior and emphasizing the speaker's subjective judgment. The Torchinov's translation uses "доверится" to highlight the passiveness and objectivity of the behavior.

The choice of modal adverb "можно" is, on the one hand, due to the difference in modal expression, on the other hand, may be the preference of the translator. The following example:

故不可得而亲，不可得而疏；不可得而利，不可得而害；不可得而贵，不可得而贱，故为天下贵。(Chapter 56)

Поэтому с человеком, обретшим его, нельзя сблизиться, чтобы с ним сродниться, и с ним нельзя сблизиться, чтобы его отбросить. С ним нельзя сблизиться, чтобы извлечь из этого пользу, и с ним нельзя сблизиться, чтобы другим причинить с его помощью вред. С ним нельзя сблизиться, чтобы стать знатным, и с ним нельзя сблизиться, чтобы стать низкородным. Поэтому он почитается всей Поднебесной. (Torchinov)

А потому: [с Ним] невозможно соединиться, [от Него] невозможно и отделиться. [Ему] нельзя принести пользу, [Ему] невозможно нанести и вред. [Его] невозможно сделать дорогим, [Его] невозможно сделать и дешевым. Поэтому [изначально-сокровенное тождество] и является ценностью для Поднебесной. (Lukyjanov)

The original text uses "不可(not possible)" for six times, which in Torchinov's translation are all translated as "нельзя", while in Lukyjanov's translation, they are translated into "невозможно" 5 times and "нельзя" once. When the Russian word "нельзя" is used in conjunction with verbs of the perfective aspect, it means that it is impossible to complete something, which is equivalent to "невозможно", and there is no obvious difference in semantic and function between the two. Therefore, we believe that the difference in the selection of "невозможно" and "нельзя" between the two translations is mainly due to the preference of the translators.

There is also difference in the use of modal particle "пусть", for example:

居善地，心善渊，与善仁，言善信，正善治，事善能，动善时。(Chapter 8)

Живи в благих землях, пусть твое сердце станет полноводным водоемом блага. Пусть милосердие твое всегда обрящет единение с благом, а речи проникнутся благом достоверности. Всегда осуществляй благое исправление, свершай дела благие по возможности своей и действуй лишь во время должное, благое. (Torchinov)

Селясь где-нибудь, проявляй доброту к земле. Сердцу повинуйся, проявляй доброту безмерно. Завязывая дружбу, наполняй добротой Жэнь (Человеколюбие). Говоря что-либо, наполняй добротой Синь (Доверие-Веру). Управляя, согласовывай с добротой методы управления. Отправляя службы, наполняй добротой способности. Действуя, будь добр, следуй времени. (Lukyjanov)

The modal particle "пусть" constitutes the third person imperative structure, in which "пусть" has certain modality, highlighting the speaker's emotion and attitude to the discourse. In the above example, Lukyjanov's translation uses second person imperative seven times, while Torchinov's translation uses second person imperative five times and the third person imperative twice, which on the one hand avoids singularity in the sentence expressions, on the other hand strengthens the modality, making the discourse more emotional.

3) *Personal and possessive pronouns*: There are significant differences in the use of the first and second

personal pronouns and possessive pronouns between the two translations. The data are shown in "Table V".

TABLE V. DATA ON PERSONAL AND POSSESSIVE PRONOUNS

Items	Torchinov	Lukyanov
я	71	38
мой	1	3
мы	11	0
наш	2	0
ты	16	2
твой	6	0
вы	1	1
ваш	2	0
Total	110	44
Ratio	1.59	0.71

It can be seen from "Table V" that the number and proportion of the first and second personal pronouns as well as possessive pronouns in Torchinov's translation are much higher than the corresponding values in Lukyanov's translation. Among them, the first personal pronouns "я" and "мы" in Torchinov's translation are used 71 and 11 times respectively, while the corresponding values in Lukyanov's translation are 38 and 0, the second personal pronoun "ты" in Torchinov's translation appears 16 times, and in Lukyanov's translation appears twice. The use of the first person in Russian emphasizes the importance of introspection. By using the first person, the translator creates a space for equal dialogue, which gives the readers a sense of substitution to resonate emotionally with them. The second person in Russian can also express self-professionalism. In fact, it also refers to the self. The speaker changes his points of view to express his views, so as to achieve the universality and objectivity of statements, which makes readers feel the same. E.g:

何谓宠辱若惊? 宠为下, 得之若惊, 失之若惊, 是谓宠辱若惊。(Chapter 13)

Почему так говорят о почестях и о позоре? Позор нас унижает, ну а почести мы со страхом принимаем и со страхом же теряем. (Torchinov)

Что значит «любовь и бесчестье подобны страху»? Любовь идет от низов, ее обретают со страхом, ее и теряют со страхом. Вот что значит «любовь и бесчестье подобны страху». (Lukyanov)

Here is another example:

知其雄, 守其雌, 为天下溪。为天下溪, 常德不离, 复归于婴儿。(Chapter 28)

Знай мужественность свою и женственность свою храни, Тогда долиной пустоты для Поднебесной станешь ты. Долиною для Поднебесной став, ты не лишишься этого вечного обретения. Тогда ты вновь вернешься к состоянию младенца. (Torchinov)

Кто знает свое женское, хранит свое мужское, становится ложбиной Поднебесной. Ставшего ложбиной Поднебесной постоянное Дэ не оставляет и возвращает в [состояние] младенца. (Lukyanov)

The Torchinov translation makes extensive use of the first person and the second person for internal introspection, and an equal dialogue with the readers, so that the statement obtains a universality and objectivity, which goes in line with the expression characteristics of the *Tao Te Ching* as a philosophical thought.

4) *The use of foreign forms*: “道(Tao)”, “德(Te)” and “仁(Ren)” are the core vocabulary with cultural connotation in *Tao Te Ching*, which can be regarded as foreign forms for Russian culture. Investigating the use of these words, we found that the two translations show different characteristics. The data are shown in "Table VI".

TABLE VI. DATA ON FOREIGN FORMS

Items	Source text	Torchinov		Lukyanov	
道 (Tao)	76	Дао	17	Дао	70
		Дао-Путь	34	Не-Дао	5
		Путь-Дао	7	высказать	1
		Путь/путь	10		
		Дао+Путь	3		
		пройти	1		
		он	1		
<No translation>	3				
德 (Te)	44	Благо-Дэ	6	Дэ	42
		Сила-Дэ	10	Дэ (Добродетель)	2
		Благо	13		
		обретение	1		
		Сила-Благостная	1		
Благая Сила	13				
仁	8	милосерден	2	Жэнь (Человеколюбие)	4
		милосердие	5	искусность	1

(Ren)	изошренность	1	Жэнь	3
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It can be seen from "Table VI" that Torchinov's translation methods are more diverse and flexible, while Lukyanov's means of rendering are relatively simple. For example, to translate "道(Tao)", Torchinov uses "Дао", "Дао-Путь", "Путь-Дао", "путь" or "Путь", "дао" with "путь", verb "пройти", pronoun "он", and omission, while Lukyanov's translation only takes "Дао", "Не-Дао" and verb "высказать". To translate "德(De)", Torchinov adopts six translation versions including "Благо-Дэ", "Сила-Дэ", among which "обретение (得 Te)" is used once. In Chinese ancient literature, "德(De)" and "得(te)" are connected and similar, which means "to get". This also shows that Torchinov's understanding of the original text is more diverse. Lukyanov uses the transliteration method to translate to "Дэ", and both of them are supplied with the free translation "Добродетель". Lukyanov tends to use transliteration or transliteration combined with free translation, which is reflected in translations of other core cultural vocabulary such as "仁(Ren)" – "Жэнь" or "Жэнь (Человеколюбие)".

IV. CONCLUSION

After comparing the TTR, LD and average sentence length of the two translations, it is found that the two versions demonstrate differences in macro-linguistic features, but these differences are not significant. In other words, in terms of macro-linguistic features, there is no obvious difference in the translation styles of the two translations. At the discourse level, the coherence, modality structures, pronouns, and the use of foreign forms are quite different, which means that there are obvious distinctions between narrative perspectives, thus reflecting their respective translation styles.

Firstly, there are considerable differences in the translation of textual coherence in transition, coordination, contrast, condition, and especially causality. Torchinov's translation mostly employs "поэтому", while Lukyanov's mainly uses "вот почему", which strengthens the speaker's subjective attitude to causality relationship.

Secondly, the selection of modal adverbs is, on the one hand, due to the difference in modal expressions. Lukyanov uses modal adverb "можно" with transitive verbs, emphasizing the subject's behavior and the speaker's subjective judgment. On the other hand, it could be attributed to the preference of the translators. Torchinov utilizes "нельзя", while Lukyanov's translation prefers "невозможно". And Torchinov's translation uses modal "пусть" to constitute third-person imperative.

Thirdly, Torchinov's translation uses the first personal and the second personal pronouns to conduct

internal introspection and an equal dialogue with the readers to make the statement more universal and objective, which goes in line with the characteristics of *Tao Te Ching* as a philosophical thought.

Fourthly, to translate words with cultural connotations like "道(Tao)" and "德(De)", Torchinov's method is more diverse and flexible, while Lukyanov's method is relatively direct and simple. Lukyanov prefers transliteration and free translation.

The differences between the two translations may stem from differences in understanding the original texts, differences in interpretations of Tao culture, and differences in translator's ways of language expression. Although different translators express the original works in different ways, they can all achieve the goal of conveying and interpreting the specific style of the original works in their own unique ways.

This paper is a tentative study to investigate the translation styles of the Russian versions of *Tao Te Ching*, and there is still room for improvement. Future research can be carried out from the following aspects: first, research on more translators' versions, including diachronic research; second, research on differences between different versions of the same translator; third, research on subtext information, unique vocabulary translation, and specific sentence structure rendering, etc.

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